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FM AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0690
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEKATERINBURG 0156

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: THE ROMANOV: THE FINAL CHAPTER IN YEKATERINBURG

¶1. ON A SUNNY JULY 16 MORNING, THOUSANDS OF YEKATERINBURGERS WAITED IN LINE TO PAY THEIR FINAL RESPECTS TO NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRIA. EXACTLY EIGHTY YEARS BEFORE, ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 16-17, 1918, THE ROMANOV: HAD BEEN BRUTALLY MURDERED HERE. THEIR REMAINS NOW LAID IN STATE AT YEKATERINBURG'S ASCENSION CHURCH ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE SITE WHERE THE EXECUTIONS HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT. THE COFFINS OF THE TSAR AND TSARITSA WERE DRAPED WITH THE BRIGHT YELLOW IMPERIAL STANDARD BEARING THE BLACK DOUBLE-HEADED EAGLE CREST. BEHIND THEM LAID THE COFFINS OF THREE GRAND DUCHESSES AND FOUR MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD STAFF.

¶2. AT MIDDAY, THE ASCENSION CHURCH'S SENIOR PRIEST CONDUCTED A MEMORIAL SERVICE: 'WE PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF SOULS INNOCENTLY SLAIN AND THEIR NAMES ARE KNOWN TO THEE, OUR LORD.' THE LITURGY WAS SOLEMN AND MODEST, A WELCOME CHANGE AFTER YEARS OF UNSEEMLY POLITICAL INFIGHTING OVER THE BONES. GOVERNOR ROSSEL AND THE REST OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL ELITE ATTENDED THE SERVICE. THEY WERE JOINED BY THE MINISTER OF CULTURE FROM MOSCOW. THE ONLY CONSPICUOUS ABSENTEES WERE THE PRESIDENTIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO SVERDLOVSK OBLAST AND YEKATERINBURG'S ARCHBISHOP. NO ONE FROM THE ROYAL FAMILY WAS PRESENT. THE MOST SATISFIED PERSON IN THE CHURCH WAS ALEKSANDR AVDONIN, WHO WAS WITNESSING A CEREMONY THAT HE HAD DREAMT ABOUT FOR YEARS. AVDONIN HAD DISCOVERED THE ROMANOV: GRAVESITE NEARLY TWENTY YEARS AGO.

¶3. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SERVICE, A MILITARY HONOR GUARD CARRIED THE COFFINS FROM THE CHURCH SLOWLY PAST THE CROWD TO WAITING VEHICLES. AS THE LEAD PALLBEARERS EMERGED FROM THE CHURCH WITH THE TSAR'S COFFIN, BLACK CLOUDS APPEARED AND A RAINSTORM BEGAN. A FEW OLD WOMEN DROPPED TO THEIR KNEES AND CROSSED THEMSELVES VIGOROUSLY. SHORTLY AFTER THE LAST COFFIN WAS LOADED AND THE MOTORCADE DEPARTED FOR THE AIRPORT, THE RAIN STOPPED. BY MID-AFTERNOON, THE ROMANOV: HAD LEFT YEKATERINBURG FOR THE LAST TIME ON THEIR WAY TO INTERMENT IN ST. PETERSBURG.

¶4. THE SHOW NOW MOVES TO RUSSIA'S NORTHERN CAPITAL, BUT TWO QUESTIONS REMAIN IN YEKATERINBURG:

--WHERE ARE THE REMAINS OF THE OTHER TWO ROYAL FAMILY MEMBERS, THE TSAREVICH AND GRAND DUCHESS MARIYA?

--AND HOW SHOULD YEKATERINBURG BEST COMMEMORATE THE ROMANOV: MEMORY HERE?

ON THE LATTER, THE YEKATERINBURG ARCHDIOCESE AND THE OBLAST GOVERNMENT HAVE COMMISSIONED A DESIGN FOR A 'CHURCH ON THE BLOOD' TO BE BUILT ON THE SITE WHERE THE ROYAL FAMILY WAS KILLED. THE FIVE-DOMED CHURCH'S DESIGN IS SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW THE STYLE OF NOVGOROD'S ELEVENTH CENTURY CHURCHES. CONSTRUCTION COSTS ARE ESTIMATED AT USD 4 MILLION. UNFORTUNATELY, THE NEW CHURCH'S COURTYARD WILL LIKELY BE MARRED BY A TASTELESS SCULPTURE OF THE ROYAL FAMILY DESIGNED BY YEKATERINBURG'S VERSION OF TSERETELI.

ON THE FORMER, AVDONIN CLAIMS THAT HE KNOWS WHERE THE

OTHER TWO CHILDREN WERE BURIED IN 1918. AT A JULY 15
PRESS CONFERENCE, GOVERNOR ROSSEL SAID THAT A SEARCH
FOR ALEKSEY AND MARIYA WILL BE MOUNTED. HE HASTENED
TO ADD THAT, IF THEIR REMAINS ARE FOUND, THEY WILL BE
BURIED TOGETHER WITH THE REST OF THE FAMILY IN ST.
PETERSBURG.

RUSSELL